

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF COOPERATIVES

7 July 2007

The theme for this year's International Day of Cooperatives -- "Cooperative Values and Principles for Corporate Social Responsibility" -- underscores the important role cooperatives can play in promoting corporate social responsibility.

If rooted in universal principles, business can help bring social and economic gains and balance profit motives with increased attention to social, environmental and ethical concerns. This is the founding conviction of the United Nations Global Compact initiative, which brings companies together with United Nations agencies, labour groups and civil society to support principles in the areas of human rights, labour, the environment and the fight against corruption.

With values deeply rooted in democracy, equality, equity and solidarity, cooperatives have a great deal to contribute to corporate social responsibility. They subscribe to the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and concern for the community, while promoting self-help, self-responsibility and the pursuit of economically worthwhile enterprises. They help people improve their lives and those of their communities.

Highly successful cooperatives are able to expand their businesses without compromising the interest of their members or communities. Cooperative banks, through microfinance services, support disadvantaged segments of the population, by providing needed credit to start micro-enterprises. Many cooperatives provide health, social and educational services and promote employment for marginalized groups, such as persons with disabilities.

With over 800 million member-owners worldwide, cooperatives provide an estimated 100 million jobs. And they are key partners in our collective efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goals.

Business, as a major component of society, has a vital role and a clear responsibility to help resolve the world's most pressing problems. On this International Day, let us use the values and principles of cooperatives to strengthen corporate social responsibility and, together, work to better address the needs of humanity.